

Overall Ministry Strategy Guide (Introduction and Planning Level)

(For Advocates presenting to the Deacons, Elders, Leadership, Committees, Councils, Staff)

“Methodologies for Introducing and Rolling-out a new Ministry, example Lightcast’s live audio connection, a ministry for Home-bounds”

Healthy Churches:

We would like to begin with some ideas many share about a healthy leaders and a healthy church. Taken from his pamphlet “The Biblical Design of a Healthy Church”, Edwin Jenkins (Director of the Office of Leadership/Church Growth Alabama Baptist Convention State Board of Missions) writes the following:

Some churches function incidentally, some accidentally and some intentionally.” Churches need to “consider regularly God’s desire, God’s design, God’s direction”, and ask “where are we headed” to become an “intentional church.” “There must be a conscious decision to do what God directs. And there must be a determination to keep on doing what God directs even when that becomes challenging.” As for the accidental church, this is when churches “proceed from incident to incident, occasion to occasion, even mishap to mishap, with many ups and downs.”

Mr. Jenkins goes on to write, “the foundation of a healthy intentional church is based on the Great Commission (Mathew 28:18-20) and the Great Commandment” ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’. (Mark 12:29-31) Also, “Healthy churches demonstrate authentic concern and dedicate genuine effort to these four ministries --- spiritual growth, mission advancement, ministry involvement, and outreach effectiveness.” He mentions under “outreach effectiveness”, the outgrowth of the other 3 initiatives, “churches reach out effectively when their focus is authentically biblical.”

Edwin then notes that “Healthy churches demonstrate these eight characteristic factors:

1. God-given vision
2. Transformational leadership - not just transactional, the members are transformed to the point that they carry on without the leader
3. Functional Strategy - in worship, discipleship, ministry, evangelism, fellowship and prayer
4. Meaningful Membership
5. Passionate Spirituality
6. Loving Relationships
7. Sacrificial Generosity
8. Kingdom Orientation”

The full version of this story first appeared in The Alabama Baptist.

Why is Edwin Jenkins information a prelude to our Guide to rolling out a new technology ministry? Because it all applies and is foundational to successfully move forward with your church and the team members of any new ministry.

Technology Ministry Implementation Guide

Implementing a relevant and authentic technology ministry takes into account and relies on general systems theory, project management skills, team building, leadership skills, risk management and technology all with the basis of theology. These implementations require commitment, energy, direction, communication, planning, authorization, execution, maintenance and monitoring.

This implementation guide uses the example of a Lightcast Networks ministry roll out. Lightcast brings technology used to re-engage a church's Home-bounds. Churches can also use this ministry tool for new member lay ministry integration. In this case, it is truly a 2-fold ministry tool helping both new lay helpers and Home-bounds be closer to the presence God.

What about underpinnings of implementing a new technical ministry, the good and the tough? **First** off, many will not participate or walk away if they are not properly trained to be able to work with technology or in a new ministry. On the other side of the spectrum, some are consumed with technology wanting only the newest most futuristic and, unfortunately for the Home-bounds, will wait until the point it can be budgeted. Example, "We will wait until there is Internet streaming video connecting to their TVs and it is affordable." This is technology for technology's sake, a ministry without theology and this is a tragedy. **Second**, technology is a servant and a factor but not a foundation for ministry. We all know the actual message and the principles are the foundation. We must be remindful that principles such as particularity and intentionally are the connections with knowing God. **Third**, it is critical for success there be the effort and ability to methodically integrate and not impose technology into the church. This can be done theologically by teaching about how a new technology ministry will advance the work of Christ. **The sponsor(s) must emphasize the community and the mutuality effects from both sides of the ministry equation. There are the ministry team's lay people who help install the technology, those Home-Bounds or recipients who use the technology and the all encompassing connection with these individuals. The congregation's compassion, the church leadership and the spirit can drive a sphere of inter-connections.** Example: The minister speaks of Mrs. Smith who is home with a broken hip, teenage lay ministers by her side with a hymnal, the lay minister who installed her Lightcast receiver is in the congregation, her daughter and grand children are in the congregation and her son in-law in the choir. A prayer and song goes out to Mrs. Smith and the whole congregation feels it. **Fourth**, the significant involvement of lay persons in the implementation of the new technologies in ministry should **lift up the importance of lay ministry** in the whole church, as well as in those lay people involved instigates an interactive membership. A correctly devised technology will create an authentic interactive (not passive) member relationship. A technical ministry is about empowering lay persons to utilize their gifts in ways they never thought possible. It uses gifts for the purposes for advancing God's kingdom. When we realize that God is using us to care for God's family, an unspeakable joy and peace rises from within our soul and this can change uncompassionate perceptions and balance overcome constraints. If we do not realize this, everything just looks like an expense. In a healthy church, faith will guide the way and find the necessary resources for relevant ministry technologies, like it does the costs of electricity, water and maintenance.

So what are the stages we should expect in a new Technical Ministry roll out?

Stages of implementing a new engaging technology:

1. Nervous sense of being overwhelmed
2. Mystifying and wonderful
3. Engrossed and energized

How does the Sponsor(s) of a new technical ministry concept begin to start to move it forward?

It begins when an advocate is enlightened by thoughts or new information on what technology can do to help others.

A Brief Description of the Technology from Lightcast.

Lightcast has created a new way to connect Home-bounds to the sanctuary sound system or Sunday school classroom. Using a simple telephone connection and easy to use equipment, volunteers can easily install this equipment, called "Lightcast Certified Home Receivers", at the Home-bounds home. The sound or mixer system operators can connect the church sound system, and thus the service, using another piece of equipment called "Lightcast Certified Church Interface". These connections create real-time audio listening and in certain cases 2-way audio interactions. Many churches are initiating this technology because it costs less than radio and allows more functionality. A connection can be quickly scheduled unlike radio or TV. Accessible nationwide and in some cases internationally, Lightcast is available anywhere a person can use a telephone line.

There are over 8 million isolated Home-bounds in the United States of America alone. This does not include the many isolated caregivers taking care of them. 50% of Home-bounds profess to be Christians. Only a small percentage of this group of individuals is able to access to their church real time, via the radio or TV. Due to budget constraints, many churches do offer cassette or VHS ministries to their Home-Bounds. Although this brings a much needed personal touch, these cassettes are days to weeks dated and sometimes a technical issue for Home-bounds to use. Many times the perceptions can be that there is nothing else more the church can do for these members, with the resources at hand. The perception can even be that once a Home-bound enters a institution (assisted living or nursing home), they are inactive, and treated as such. However, in some churches they do seem to show up on a member list as active. This article below is about a method for rolling out a new type of low-tech ministry to Home-bounds. To treat them as active members, allowing them interactivity, whether at home or in an institution. This guide can be applied as a framework to other new ministry rollouts. We hope you see the crossovers as we use Lightcast Networks simple technology as the example.

How do we start a new technology ministry like Lightcast? High level (these are detailed later in the guide and many steps can be combined)

1. Analyze the need for and benefits of the new ministry, will it glorify God, is it worth the sacrifices in time money and energy? This may take surveys and polls of home-bounds and those that could volunteer.
2. If the need is worth it, commit to become the Ministry Sponsor(s) and define and paint the **Vision**.
3. Create a **Ministry Charter Document** breaking down vision, mission, goals, scope and organization (see our exhibit 1" chart")
4. Design a **Ministry roll out plan** including a **task schedule**; this will include all of these next steps.
5. Develop accurate budgets and a **Master Ministry Budget Plan** including costs and potential funding sources.
6. Forecast realistic timelines.
7. Call for a **Ministry Orientation Meeting** of all stakeholders and committees, which may overlap in helping this ministry function.
8. **Develop a structure for a special ministry committee** during this Orientation meeting - involve all stakeholders in creating and embracing vision for technology, make your volition and enthusiasm contagious.
9. Create a **Ministry Presentation** including the Ministry Charter Document, Budget and timelines.
10. **Call for a Ministry meeting to present for approval and authorization to move forward.** Plan to address resistance, e.g. keep the speak user friendly and the focus on principles the church is based on. Before presenting, always look for solutions to issues that you believe may arise.

FOR MORE DETAIL ON THESE 10 STEPS SEE "Breakdown - the 10 steps to Implementing a new Tech Ministry" pdf